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A Temperance Society

Composed of
Labor Leaders....

By **CHARLES STELZLE**

IT has been feared that if an aggressive movement against the saloon, and in favor of total abstinence were to be inaugurated in the United States it would split the American Labor Movement. There can be no doubt that if the present attitude of organized labor with regard to the saloon is continued it will unquestionably result in the destruction of the trade unions of the United States. For the best leaders in the movement are protesting most vigorously against the arrogance of those who contend that every trade unionist must stand unqualifiedly for the liquor traffic, as it is now being conducted, for this is virtually what the bartenders and brewery workers and allied industries are asking organized labor to do. They insist that organized labor must say, "Hands off!" to those who are fighting the saloon and its evils!

The bona fide trade unionists in this country—those who are sincerely seeking the emancipation of the workers from all forms of oppression—need not fear the results of abolishing the liquor traffic, for we already have a most conspicuous example of what abstinence in other countries has accomplished in the history of the "Trades Union and Labor Officials' Temperance Fellowship." This is an English organization which has for its object "the personal practice

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF B. C.

and promotion of total abstinence, and the removal of Trades Societies' meetings from licensed premises." Arthur Henderson, one of the most representative labor leaders in Great Britain, and who has just been made a member of the British Cabinet through his appointment as president of the board of education, is responsible for the organization of this fellowship. Mr. Henderson has been president of the federation since its organization.

Among its vice presidents are the following, all of whom are labor members of the House of Parliament: John Burns, Thomas Burt, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Will Crooks, J. Keir Hardie, Philip Snowden, Stephen Walsh, David J. Shackleton, John Wilson, J. W. Taylor, G. J. Wardle, A. H. Gill, G. N. Barnes, J. R. Clynes, C. Duncan, J. G. Hancocks, J. Hodge, W. Hudson, Joseph Pointer, T. Richards. Every man of this group is known among well-informed labor men in the United States. There isn't a weakling in the bunch. They stand absolutely for organized labor and its principles. Several of them have been fraternal delegates to the American Federation of Labor Conventions.

The Fellowship had its beginning in Leeds, in 1904, during a session of the British Trades Congress. A "tea party" was held by invitation of the "National Temperance League," at which 260 delegates were present. Mr. Henderson, on behalf of his colleagues, who had been considering the matter, made the suggestion that a total abstinence society be established in connection with labor.

During the following year many officials in the Trades Union Movement manifested their interest in the proposed society, with the result that at the Hanley meeting of the Trades Congress in 1905, at a gathering of 300 delegates, the "Temperance Fellowship" was launched.

Practically every year since its organization the Fellowship has given a "tea" at the time of the annual meeting of the British Trades Congress, and in each case fully half of the delegates attending have been present, and have manifested their active interest in the aims and objects of the Fellowship.

At the last annual meeting of the Fellowship held in Manchester, Mr. Henderson, who presided, stated that he had "come to the conclusion that strong drink was an obstacle to social and economic development, and that those who ought to fight that obstacle most were the wage earners, and more particularly the leaders of organized labor, who knew the serious inroads that drink made at times in the ranks of the working classes."

In taking this position it was not held that the working people were more intemperate than any other class in the community, but that of all people, the working class can least afford to be associated with the drink traffic, either socially, economically, politically or morally.

It was stated at this meeting that a large number of national and local officials in the labor movement today were abstainers than ever before in the history of Trade Unionism in Great Britain, and that more meetings were being held on unlicensed premises than ever before.

A significant statement made by Harry Gosling, the Honorable Secretary of the Fellowship, was that "there never was a time in which the Fellowship could assert so powerful an influence in the betterment of industrial conditions as in the strenuous present, where clear thinking and perfect control are so essential."

The Fellowship issues considerable literature, and sends out its manifestoes through the

various local Labor Unions and the labor press. When the "National Freedom Defense League," representing the liquor interests, sent out a statement purporting to be in the interest of the workers from the social and economic standpoint, the entire executive committee, and all of the vice presidents got out a counter petition, which was given the widest publicity through the daily press. Labor's statement was also given additional publicity through imprints issued by many local and national Trades Unions. These publications effectively silenced the pretended friends of the workingman.

In the fight made a few years ago for the licensing bill in Parliament the labor members fought valiantly for its passage. Its enactment would eventually have destroyed the liquor business in Great Britain, but the bill was thrown out by the House of Lords.

The influence of this organization upon the rank and file of the workers has been remarkable. Temperance sentiment has been rapidly growing among the younger men in the labor movement, and as the secretary of the General Federation of Trades Unions said to the writer, "It is no longer considered honorable or decent for a laboring man to put away three bottles of porter."

The effect of the British movement has undoubtedly been that of raising the level of living of the workers and the standards in trades union practice to such a degree as to win the confidence, not only of the workers themselves, but of those whose respect and friendship is distinctively worth while. The British Trades Unions are now stronger than ever, having a membership of about 3,000,000.



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